

## San Francisco Superfund Site Scanned for Radiological Waste (2)

By Emily C. Dooley

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- Toxic chemicals, radioactive waste dumped at Hunters Point, San Francisco
- Much of the 522-acre site being redeveloped, requiring additional scrutiny

Crews testing for radiological compounds like radium, cesium, and strontium are surveying sanitary sewers and storm drains at a Navy cleanup site that was once a dry dock as part of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, which borders San Francisco Bay.

Hunters Point Naval Shipyard encompassed 522 acres and was home to dry dock operations, a nuclear-research lab, and a ship-repair company over the years, with operations dating back to 1869. Toxic chemicals and radioactive waste were dumped there and the site has been under federal scrutiny since the 1980s.

"If anything may have spilled on the surface, it could have gotten into those lines," said Derek Robinson, environmental program manager for the Navy's Base Realignment and Closure program management office in San Diego.

As part of the survey of the federal Superfund site, Navy crews or contractors will take soil samples and use video cameras to look for cracks or breaks in lines, and a gamma detector to test for radioactivity, according to the work plan for what is called Parcel C Historic District. The work plan was released in February.

### Concern About Sediment

Parcel C is the oldest part of the site and has traditionally been a dry dock. It is slated as a future site for mixed-use development, research facilities, cultural institutions, and open space. If radiation is detected, it will be remediated, Navy documents said.

The sewer system isn't currently in use and Robinson said there is no risk to people. "We're really concerned about potential sediment on the bottom [of the sea floor] that has settled out and is still there," he said.

This is the latest testing at the site, which has been under increased scrutiny after two employees of Navy contractor Tetra Tech EC Inc. admitted in 2017 to falsifying records about radiological sampling on the property.

Several lawsuits have been filed by residents who bought houses on redeveloped land there, claiming their property values have dropped because of health concerns. Different studies from the Navy, California Department of Public Health, and San Francisco Department of Public Health have found no evidence of adverse health effects.

On April 11, Tetra Tech asked for fraud claims brought in federal court by the U.S. Attorney's Office for Northern District of California be dismissed "because there is no evidence or a single fact presented of wrongdoing by the company or its management from its work at Hunters Point Shipyard," Tetra Tech spokesman Sam Singer said in an email.

The motion for dismissal said the case has proceeded "perhaps as a result of political pressure and negative press about the Hunters Point cleanup and redevelopment effort."

Despite the studies, San Francisco Mayor London Breed and other city officials have also asked experts from the San Francisco and Berkeley campuses of the University of California to determine if state and federal officials used appropriate radiation testing procedures. The six-month study, announced April 17, will review the data and interview Navy, Environmental Protection Agency, state and city officials.

"We have requested an independent and thorough analysis of the testing procedures at the shipyard so that the community can have clarity on whether or not the testing that has been done is appropriate and sufficient for this site," Breed said in a news release. "This community deserves transparency and accountability."

(Updates with additional detail on work plan and lawsuit in the fourth and 10th paragraphs. An earlier version of the story corrected the spelling of San Francisco in the headline.)

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